



Johnson Space Center

The space shuttle

NASA's workhorse

The space shuttle has served America's science and research programs for nearly 25 years. The shuttle, which was on the drawing board even before humans first landed on the moon in 1969, was envisioned as a way to deliver humans and cargo to and from a space station. Since budget



Space Shuttle Discovery approaches the Rotating and Fixed Service Structures on Launch Pad 39B after rollout from the Vehicle Assembly Building.

Endeavour. Shuttle flights have supported both the Mir and International Space Stations, deployed and visited the Hubble Space Telescope five times and deployed planetary spacecraft to study Jupiter, Venus and the sun. In the orbiters' onboard laboratories, hundreds of experiments have helped scientists study the effects of microgravity on materials, plants, animals and human beings to benefit life on Earth.

Thousands of advances in technology and design have been incorporated into the shuttle since its first launch. The shuttle fleet will fly for a few more years to support the assembly and maintenance of the International Space Station, among other missions.

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constraints made it possible to develop only one program initially, shuttle was chosen as the logical first step to establishing a more permanent human presence in space.

First launched in April 1981, the space shuttle is the only spacecraft capable of delivering and returning large payloads and scientific experiments to and from space. Today, the shuttle fleet is comprised of *Discovery*, *Atlantis* and

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